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Title: Increase in water tariffs by Delhi Jal Board.

DR. TARUN MANDAL (JAYNAGAR): Madam Speaker, thank you for allowing me to raise this Urgent Matter of Public Importance in this House.

Water is the elixir of life. The recent decision of the Delhi Jal Board to hike the water tariff will deprive lakhs of people in and around this national capital city of water. It is horrible to hear that the Delhi Jal Board is going to raise the water tariff by at least 100 per cent from the beginning of the New Year. What a surprise gift, Madam, to the people of the Delhi city, which is our pride and the capital of the nation!

I appeal to the Union Government to take up the lifesaving issue with the State Government of Delhi run by the Indian National Congress and let them not create a desert at Delhi hiking the price of water.

Already, people under the leadership of Socialist Unity Centre of India (Communist) have come down to streets protesting this harsh and anti-people decision of the State Government of Delhi. They have put up a massive *dharna* before the Delhi Secretariat for withdrawal of this decision since this morning.

This decision is denial of a civic body or Government to supply water to its own citizens. Everything and anything of life cannot be measured in the scale of profit and with business motive. Social commitment, the so-called human face of democracy, is getting blurred day by day, and taken over by inhuman economic compulsions as per the dictates of the WTO, World Bank, IMF, ADB etc. So far, India has become a partner of the WTO. Social sectors like water, electricity, education and health are brought into trade and rampant privatisations are going on in these sectors. Nobody knows how, at least, the 65 per cent of population of metropolitan cities, which comprises the poor and low economic class, will survive after this decision.

The Government of India under the UPA should not lessen essential expenditures, which are being designated as subsidies nowadays in basic civil services. Instead of giving grants and exemptions to big business houses, they should bear the responsibility of a civilised Government. It should keep in mind that if the Government cannot bear the burden of extra cost of making water available, how will the people, already sunk under huge price hike of essential commodities, endure the burden from their empty pockets? Privatisation of electricity is already doing havoc on our people. Please do not put further pressure on the already pressurised people. Please do not make the situation 'water, water everywhere, not a drop to drink'.